

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

INRE-00 SP-02 L-01 PM-03 DODE-00 CIAE-00 EUR-08 /045 W

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O 221847Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8736

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 10261

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VS

SUBJECT: GVN CHIEF NEGOTIATOR'S RETURN TO SAIGON

REF: PARIS 09617

1. GVN CHIEF NEGOTIATOR, NGUYEN XUAN PHONG, TOLD EMBOFF AND JEC DEL REP THAT HE HAD BEEN CALLED URGENTLY TO SAIGON BY THE MFA ACTING ON INSTRUCTIONS DIRECTLY FROM PRESIDENT HUONG. PHONG DEPARTS PARIS APRIL 23 VIA AIR FRANCE ARRIVING SAIGON NOON APRIL 24.

2. PHONG SAID HE WOULD PUSH VIGOROUSLY FOR RAPID IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IDEAS HE HAS OUTLINED PREVIOUSLY REFTEL. HE BELIEVES THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO OFFER TO THE PRG SOMETHING OF SUBSTANCE -- RATHER THAN THE MERE FORM WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED PREVIOUS GVN PROPOSALS. FROM CONTACTS INDIRECTLY WITH THE PRG, HE BELIEVES THE PRG IS INTERESTED IN A SHARE OF THE POWER IN SVN AND MAY BE PREPARED TO PERMIT THE CONTINUATION FOR AT LEAST A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME OF AN INDEPENDENT*NEUTRALIST AND NONCOMMUNIST (BUT NOT ANTI-COMMUNIST) SVN. HE HOPES ALSO THAT NVN WILL ACCEPT SUCH A RESOLUTION. PHONG EXPLAINED THIS BELIEF BY SAYING THAT, WHILE THE MILITARY SITUATION WAS SUCH THAT THE NVN FORCES COULD TAKE
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SAIGON IN TWO TO THREE WEEKS, THEY PROBABLY WOULD DO SO

ONLY WITH CONSIDERABLE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY AND LOSS OF CIVILIAN LIVES. THUS, A NEGOTIATING CARD WAS LEFT TO THE GVN -- PERHAPS THE ONLY CARD STILL AVAILABLE -- THROUGH THE PRG AND DRV DESIRE TO AVOID SUCH COMBAT.

3. THE PRG, ACCORDING TO HIS SOUNDINGS, WOULD BE PREPARED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT FIRST OF THE COUNCIL WITHIN WHICH THEY WOULD HAVE OSTENSIBLY ONLY 1/3 OF THE POWER. THEY WOULD THEN MOVE TO A COALITION GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS WHICH WOULD CONFIRM (I.E. "RUBBER STAMP") THEIR DOMINANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE CONSIDERED THAT IT WOULD BE THE TASK OF THE NONCOMMUNIST NEGOTIATORS TO STRETCH OUT THE PROCEDURES. SINCE THE ABOVE PROCESS WOULD BE OSTENSIBLY AN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT, PHONG CONTINUED TO BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE USED AS THE BASIS OF THE GVN APPROACH. FOR EXAMPLE, HE THOUGHT THAT THE RENEWED CEASEFIRE CALL SHOULD BE CONNECTED WITH THE DELIMITATION OF ZONES AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT BETWEEN ZONES AS THE COMMUNISTS HAD PREVIOUSLY DEMANDED.

4. PHONG SAID THE APRIL 21 ELYSEE PROPOSAL PROVIDED SOME SUPPORT FOR THE GVN POSITION BY REFERRING TO THE CEASEFIRE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM. PHONG THOUGHT THE FRENCH COULD BE OF CONSIDERABLE USE NOT ONLY IN THEIR OWN CONTACTS WITH THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS BUT ALSO IN THE INFLUENCE WHICH THEY APPARENTLY WILL BE BRINGING TO BEAR ON THE EC-9 TO SUPPORT THE FRENCH PROPOSAL. PHONG NOTED THAT TO SUCCEED, ANY NEGOTIATING

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 10261

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POSITION MUST CLEARLY ALSO HAVE U.S. SUPPORT. HE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER, HOWEVER, IF SUCH SUPPORT WERE NOT ALWAYS OPEN BUT MIGHT OCCASIONALLY BE EXPRESSED THROUGH THE FRENCH. PHONG WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH EMBASSY SAIGON AND WILL HOPE TO GET THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS AFTER HE LEARNS THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S NEGOTIATION PLANS.

5. PHONG THOUGHT THAT HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN THE NEW NEGOTIATING POSITION SUCCESSFULLY EVEN TO THOSE WHO HAD BEEN CRITICS OF THE THIEU REGIME, SINCE HE WAS SURE THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO VALID ALTERNATIVE. HE THOUGHT THAT EVEN IF THE GVN GOT NOWHERE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PRG, THE GVN EFFORTS WOULD AT LEAST CREATE NEW POLARIZATION WHICH WOULD PUT THIEU'S CRITICS ON THE SIDE OF THE NEW GVN.

6. PHONG HOPED TO RETURN VERY SOON TO PARIS AND THOUGHT HE MIGHT PASS THROUGH WASHINGTON ON HIS WAY.

7. COMMENT: PHONG HAS CLEARLY BEEN TALKING WITH MEMBERS OF THE GOF, WHO NO DOUBT HAVE ENCOURAGED HIM TO TAKE HIS NEGOTIATING EXPERIENCE TO HELP THE NEW GVN IN SAIGON. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE FRENCH OPTIMISM HAS RUBBED OFF ON HIM, PHONG CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS THAT THIS
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IS A LAST DITCH OPERATION WITH NOT VERY MUCH CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IN ADDITION TO HIS DOUBTS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF PRG AND DRV ASSURANCES, HE IS ACUTELY AWARE THAT THE STRUGGLE IS REALLY ABOUT POWER, AND THE LAO DONG PARTY HAS NOT ABANDONED ITS GOAL OF EXERCISING IT THROUGHOUT VIETNAM. IN ADDITION HE IS QUITE AWARE THAT INTERNATIONAL ASSURANCES, UN SUPPORT, ICCS INSPECTIONS AND THE LIKE GIVE NO GUARANTEE THAT EVEN WHAT MIGHT BE AGREED WITH THE PRG WOULD ACTUALLY BE IMPLEMENTED. PHONG FULLY REALIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS TASK AS THE ONLY MEANS NOW AVAILABLE TO THE GVN AND WILL TAKE HIS USUAL ENERGY, INTELLIGENCE AND HUMOR TO THE SEARCH FOR SOME POLITICAL WAY OUT.
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